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ABSTRACT

Issues for teachers and administrators to consider when introducing a new course in psychology at the high school level are listed in this checklist. The checklist is organized into the following sections: rationale for introducing a psychology course, target population, course content, teaching strategies, concerns for physical safety, ethical concerns, community resources, and qualifications of the psychology teachers. Also provided is an annotated list of resources, including psychology organizations, periodicals and books, and sources for planning and developing a course. Additional resources are discussed. (RM)

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CHECKLIST FOR A NEW COURSE IN PSYCHOLOGY

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American Psychological Association

American Psychological Association

1985

CHECKLIST
for a
NEW COURSE IN PSYCHOLOGY

There are many issues for teachers and administrators to consider when introducing a new course in psychology at the high school level. Some are quite obvious, others not. This brochure was prepared by the American Psychological Association's Committee on Psychology in the Secondary Schools to provide a convenient checklist of issues and a list of some resources.

Rationale for Introducing a Psychology Course

What arguments can be presented to substantiate the need for the course?

- Students of this age are often very much interested in psychology (perhaps documented by survey data).
- The course reinforces and augments the intellectual skills of scientific interpretation, problem-solving, mathematical analysis, and writing.
- The course develops in students an understanding of how psychology is applied in this society -- e.g., testing, psychotherapy, marketing and advertising, opinion surveys -- in order to make them more informed consumers.
- Students gain useful skills from the course: for example, studying more effectively, interviewing for jobs, working with children, listening to other people, evaluating propaganda, learning motor skills more quickly, and interpreting statistics.
- The course can be an important part of the school's total academic offering.
- Other reasons.

Target Population

What curriculum credit will the course carry?

- required for graduation
- optional to fulfill a graduation requirement (e.g., one of several courses that meet a requirement for a credit in science)
- elective
- noncredit

What subject credit will the course carry?
- behavioral science
- science
- social science
- social studies
- health
- other credit

By what criteria will class composition be determined?
- academic ability (high-ability students? low-ability students? a heterogeneous group?)
- first come, first served (with a maximum size)
- grade level (12th grade only? 11th and 12th grades? all grades?)
- deliberate balance (e.g., by age, grade, grade-point average, sex, ethnic background)
- other criteria (e.g., prerequisites, career plans)

By what criteria will class size be determined?
- same limit that applies to other classes
- need for a small class (e.g., for greater individual attention)
- special interest in a large class (e.g., to teach a course using a Personalized System of Instruction)
- other criteria

Course Content

What orientation or emphasis will be reflected in the course? The orientation may determine in which department the course will be housed -- natural science, social science, health, etc. -- and thus which subject credit it will carry.
- survey of psychology as an academic discipline -- an overview of the field, used both as an introduction and as preparation for college courses
- experimental method -- an emphasis on the scientific methods used in the study of behavior
- human development -- a focus on a segment of development such as child development and childrearing, adolescence, or aging, or the study of development over the human life span

- comparative and physiological psychology -- the intensive study of biology and the natural-science aspects of psychology, with a laboratory component
- social psychology -- the study of the interaction between individuals and their social environment
- personality theories - the study of behavior through the theories of Allport, Freud, Jung, Lewin, Maslow, Skinner, etc.
- personal growth -- an emphasis on self-understanding and personal development
- ethical development -- an emphasis on stages of moral development and moral dilemma discussions
- mental health -- the study of the behavior and emotions of normal people, to learn ways of living that will improve "psychological health"
- other orientation

What factors should be considered in determining the orientation?

- student interests
- the teacher's academic background and interests
- perceived gaps in current course offerings
- the goals of the school's academic program
- parental and community concerns
- available laboratory facilities
- available library facilities
- other factors

What topics might be regarded as controversial by some groups in the community?

- behavior modification
- drugs
- ethnic-group and social-class differences
- evolution
- family interaction
- genetics
- human sexuality
- psychology of religion
- sex-role stereotyping
- other topics

What can be done to minimize the possibility of negative reactions to units on controversial topics?

- Discuss the units in advance with school administrators and/or school board members so that they are informed and able to defend the educational value of the units.
- Demonstrate that the units are clearly an integral part of the subject matter.
- Demonstrate that the units meet an evident student need.
- Show that similar material has been successfully taught in neighboring or similar communities.
- When appropriate, involve concerned parents and/or community organizations in the planning and presentation of the units.
- Other steps.

Teaching Strategies

What teaching strategies are appropriate to psychology instruction?

- small-group discussion
- lecture-discussion
- individualized instruction
- programmed instruction
- inquiry/inductive teaching
- audiovisual presentations
- demonstrations
- small-group laboratory experiences
- individual laboratory experiences
- other strategies

Concerns for Physical Safety

What provisions have been made for dealing with threats to the physical safety of the students?

- training of teacher and students in safety procedures (e.g., proper handling of experimental animals) and use of emergency equipment (e.g., eye baths and fire extinguishers)
- careful advance planning of field trips
- other provisions

Ethical Concerns

What considerations have been given to ethical issues and problems that may arise in connection with instructional activities?

- experiments or demonstrations with animals or humans
- self-disclosure in class discussion
- the questioning of established values (e.g., traditional family structure, importance of competition, etc.)
- other considerations

What considerations have been given to the responsibility of the teacher if students turn to him or her for help with their personal problems?

- Be aware of the limits of one's preparation and skills; know when the student should be referred to qualified sources of counseling or therapy.
- Be familiar with the school's resources for counseling, testing, diagnosis, and therapy.
- Be familiar with appropriate resources in the community (mental health centers, peer counselor groups, drug and alcohol councils, Alcoholics Anonymous, public health clinics, etc.).
- Other considerations.

Community Resources

Have resources in the community been investigated?

- agencies and institutions that can serve as sites for field trips and/or use student volunteers for field experience (e.g., hospitals, nursing homes, mental hospitals, prisons, day-care centers, drop-in centers, senior citizen centers, etc.)
- psychologists (clinicians, teachers, and researchers) and professionals in related areas available and willing to work with the teacher or the students either in the classroom or on the job (to help plan the course, serve as guest speaker, etc.)
- the local public library and nearby college or university libraries and media centers

- lectures, films, or special demonstrations on psychological topics at nearby colleges or universities
- community and college or university agencies that can provide career guidance and information
- other resources

Qualifications of the Psychology Teacher

What can the teacher do to achieve and maintain competence in teaching psychology in the high school?

- Meet the state's requirements for certification in the teaching field of psychology.
- Attend workshops offered by state psychological associations, high school psychology teacher associations, or colleges and universities.
- Enroll in courses at nearby colleges or universities to maintain and upgrade knowledge of recent developments in psychology.
- Read current books and periodicals in the field.
- Attend state, regional, and/or national meetings of social studies teachers, science teachers, the American Psychological Association, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.
- Participate in meetings of local psychology teacher associations or meet informally with other high school psychology teachers to share ideas and information.
- Other steps.

ORGANIZATIONS

American Psychological Associaton
1200 Seventeenth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Several American Psychological Association (APA) programs can be of aid to the high school teacher.

High School Teacher Affiliates of the APA receive free one-year subscriptions to the newsletter, High School Psychology Teacher, to the magazine Psychology Today,

and to the newspaper, the APA Monitor. Affiliates also receive a discount on books published by APA and reduced subscription rates to the journals published by APA. The fee to affiliate is $15.

The Clearinghouse on Precollege Psychology distributes resource materials for high school psychology teachers and promotes communication among those working in this field. If you have any questions or problems connected with high school psychology, or would like a copy of the brochure describing the materials APA distributes for teachers, write to the Clearinghouse.

The Committee on Psychology in the Secondary Schools is charged with encouraging excellence in the teaching of psychology at the secondary school level. Its concerns include preservice education and certification, instruction and curriculum development, and inservice education. As advisory board to the Clearinghouse on Precollege Psychology and the High School Psychology Teacher newsletter, the Committee oversees the development and production of resource materials. The Committee welcomes comments and suggestions from teachers.

The Division on the Teaching of Psychology (APA Division Two) is a group of APA members for whom the teaching of psychology is a primary professional concern. The Division publishes Teaching of Psychology (see below) and also sponsors programs on teaching at APA's annual convention.

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National Council for the Social Studies
Psychology Special Interest Group
3501 Newark Street, NW
Washington, DC 20016

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has a Psychology Special Interest Group (PSIG) for educators interested in psychology. Among the activities of PSIG are special programs at the NCSS annual meetings and a newsletter.

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ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education
855 Broadway
Boulder, CO 80302

The ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, ERIC/ChESS for short, collects and indexes periodical literature and unpublished documents related to social studies/social science education. It also publishes resource materials. Short bibliographies and reference sheets are available at no cost through ERIC/ChESS. Together with the Social Science Education Consortium (see below), it operates a Resource and Demonstrations Center that contains a large collection of curriculum materials for social studies/social science education. For more information, write to Lynn Parisi, Outreach Coordinator.

* * *

Social Science Education Consortium
855 Broadway
Boulder, CO 80302

The Social Science Education Consortium conducts workshops for teachers and publishes a variety of resource materials. The most prominent among these is the Data Book, a collection of brief analyses of curriculum materials, games, texts, and teacher resource materials. First published in 1971, the Data Book is revised annually and costs $10. Teachers are placed upon request on the mailing list for newsletters and other free information related to social science teachers. For more information, write to Lynn Parisi, Outreach Coordinator.

PERIODICALS AND BOOKS

Periodicals for teachers of psychology

High School Psychology Teacher (formerly Periodically), a newsletter issued five times a year which is free to

APA High School Psychology Teacher Affiliates and APA members. The newsletter reports on recent developments in psychology, describes classroom experiments and demonstrations, and reviews books and films. Write to the Clearinghouse at APA.

Teaching of Psychology, a quarterly journal primarily for college teachers, is $10 a year for individual subscribers from Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Journal Subscription Department, 365 Broadway, Hillsdale, NJ 07642-1487.

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Periodicals for the general reader

American Psychologist, a monthly journal, $50 a year from APA ($5 for High School Teacher Affiliates and APA Members).

APA Monitor, a monthly newspaper, $25 a year from APA (free to High School Teacher Affiliates and APA members).

Contemporary Psychology, a monthly journal, $50 a year from APA ($20 for High School Teacher Affiliates and APA Members).

Discover, a monthly magazine, $22 a year from Discover, Time-Life Building, 541 North Fairbanks Court, Chicago, IL 60611

Omni, a monthly magazine, $24 a year from Omni, P.O. Box 5700, Bergenfield, NJ 07621.

Psychology Today, a monthly magazine, $15.99 a year from Psychology Today, P.O. Box 2562. Boulder, CO 80321 (free to High School Teacher Affiliates and APA Members).

Science 85, a monthly magazine, $18 a year from Science 85, Subscription Department, P.O. Box 10790, Des Moines, IA 50340

Science News, a weekly magazine, $27.50 a year from Science News, 231 West Center Street, Marion, OH 43302.

Scientific American, a monthly magazine, $24 a year from Scientific American, 415 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10017

SOURCES FOR PLANNING AND DEVELOPING A COURSE

The Activities Handbook for the Teaching of Psychology is an APA book describing 88 exercises and activities useful for teaching psychology in the high school or college classroom. Most exercises do not require specialized laboratory equipment. The book is available from the APA Order Department, $10.50 members and affiliates/$13 non-members.

Ethical Guidelines for the Teaching of Psychology is a free pamphlet which sets forth the guidelines formally established by the APA for ethical conduct in the high school psychology class. The guidelines cover the use of animals in experiments, human subjects, and the role of the teacher. Copies of the pamphlet are available from the APA Clearinghouse on Precollege Psychology.

Bibliographies. A series of free bibliographies is available from the APA Clearinghouse for Precollege Psychology. These include an annotated list of textbooks for the high school psychology course, a list of audiovisual distributors, and a bibliography of activities and demonstrations, among others.

The Human Behavior Curriculum Project is a series of eight instructional units developed by the American Psychological Association under a grant from the National Science Foundation. The themes of the units are these: Natural Behavior in Humans and Animals, States of Consciousness, School Life and Organizational Psychology, Social Influences on Behavior, Changing Attitudes, Conditioning and Learning, Language and Communication, and Studying Personality. The units may be integrated to form an entire course or be used individually as part of a course. To order write to Mel Berks, Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027. (Student readers are $3.95, teacher handbooks are $9.95.)

OTHER RESOURCES

Local teacher organizations (associations of psychology teachers, science teachers, or social studies teachers, or local or state affiliates of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association or the National Council on the Social Studies) are probably the best source of advice on what topics are likely to be controversial in a particular community and how other teachers have handled them successfully.

A local or state psychological association may be able to suggest a psychologist in your area who has indicated an interest in working with high school psychology teachers. The APA Clearinghouse (described earlier) publishes a list of many pertinent national organizations; a look in the local phone book will reveal any local chapters. The school or local hospital will often maintain a list of local helping organizations.

College and university psychology teachers often receive courtesy copies of introductory texts and instructor's manuals; the instructor's manuals, especially, are useful sources of suggested activities, demonstrations, films, and readings. Many state universities have extensive film holdings and will rent films cheaply to schools or allow a teacher to view several films so that he or she can decide which to recommend for purchase by the school system.

College and university psychology teachers may be willing to consult with high school teachers of psychology. Psychologists associated with local or state agencies, clinics, hospitals, school systems, correctional institutions etc., may also be willing to help.